

Glossary

CalWORKs Child Welfare Service Integration Project

Families who are recipients of both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services receive coordinated services to leverage maximum effectiveness from each program.

Consolidated Homestudy

Our current system licenses foster parents, and if a foster parent decides that they wish to adopt a foster child they have in their home, a separate process called an adoptive homestudy is completed. The consolidated homestudy is a one time study that would certify families for foster care and/or adoption, and would facilitate concurrent planning.

Differential Response

Differential Response, as incorporated in the Redesign, is a system of responding differentially to all the referrals of child abuse and neglect made to the Hotline/Intake. Every referral will be evaluated in terms of statutory definitions for child welfare system (CWS) involvement for immediate safety considerations; for the choice of a response time for the initial face to face interview and for the path of response. There will be some referrals screened out as not appropriate for CWS. Others will be referred to a community network of response (after permission from the parents/caretakers is granted), and still others will be opened for CWS face to face assessment.

Some CWS face to face assessments will be done without anticipating court involvement, but with the expectation that the family will be engaged to participate in services to protect the children and strengthen parental protective capacity as well as child and family well-being. Some initial assessments will be handled by CWS alone, and some by a team including CWS and partner agencies from the community. The purpose of this initial assessment is to understand what is going on within the family, what has to be done immediately to assure child safety and to engage the family in services to support parenting responsibilities. All families not screened out will receive a comprehensive assessment as to their needs. This may be done by the community network of services and supports or by CWS – alone or in partnership with team members.

Fairness and Equity In the Child Welfare Services System

A Child Welfare Services system characterized by:

- families whose children enter foster care are the same regardless of race or ethnicity;

- children's lengths of stay in foster care are not related to their race or ethnicity;
- children's rates of reunification with their birth families are the same regardless of race or ethnicity; and
- services are culturally competent and available in the languages of the families served.

The Family to Family Initiative

The United States child welfare system faces serious challenges that have been growing for more than a decade. In response, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in consultation with community leaders and child welfare practitioners nationwide, developed a reform initiative called Family to Family.

Family to Family was designed in 1992 and has now been field tested in communities across the country, including Alabama, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maryland. The Family to Family Initiative provides an opportunity for states and communities to reconceptualize, redesign, and reconstruct their foster care system to achieve the following new system-wide goals: to develop a network of family foster care that is more neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in the communities in which the children live; to assure that scarce family foster home resources are provided to all those children (but to only those children) who in fact must be removed from their homes; to reduce reliance on institutional or congregate care (in shelters, hospitals, psychiatric centers, correctional facilities, residential treatment programs and group homes) -- by meeting the needs of many more of the children currently in those settings through relative or family foster care; to increase the number and quality of foster families to meet projected needs; to reunify children with their families as soon as that can safely be accomplished, based on the family's and children's needs -- not simply the system's time frames; to reduce the lengths of stay of children in out-of-home care; to better screen children being considered for removal from home, and to determine what services might be provided to safely preserve the family; to decrease the overall number of children coming into out-of-home care; to involve foster families as team members in family reunification efforts; and to become a neighborhood resource for children and families and invest in the capacity of communities from which the foster care population comes.

The new system envisioned by Family to Family is designed to better screen children being considered for removal from home, to determine what services might be provided to safely preserve the family and/or what the needs of the children are; be targeted to bring children in congregate or institutional care back to their neighborhoods; involve foster families as team members in family reunification efforts; become a neighborhood resource for children and families and invest in the capacity of communities from which the foster care population comes; and provide permanent families for children in a timely manner.

Family to Family is comprised of four core strategies: Recruiting, Training and Supporting Resource Families; Building Community Partnerships; Team Decision Making; and Self Evaluation. County staff must be trained, and county policies and procedures must be evaluated and modified, if necessary, to implement Family to Family. Planning also has a major role in implementing Family to Family as a comprehensive change to the county child welfare services system and philosophy.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's role has been to assist states and communities with a portion of the costs involved in both planning and implementing innovations in their systems of services for children and families, and to make available technical assistance and consultation throughout the process. The Foundation also provided funds for development and for transitional costs that accelerate system change. The states, however, have been expected to sustain the changes they implement when Foundation funding comes to an end. The Foundation is also committed to accumulating and disseminating both lessons from states' experiences and information on the achievement of improved outcomes for children.

High Priority Counties

Using county specific data from the C-CFSR, high priority counties will be identified as those with performance indicators, in a specific improvement goal, that are at or below the 50th percentile in the most recent quarterly data. In order to impact the statewide performance indicators CDSS will prioritize targeted technical assistance, where required, to counties with the largest caseload.

High Performing Counties

Using county specific data from the C-CFSR, high performing counties will be identified as those with performance indicators, in a specific improvement goal, that are at or above the 75th percentile in the most recent two consecutive quarters data.

Medium Size Counties

Consistent with our Statewide Self Assessment, we define medium size counties as those counties with a population of between 500,000 and one million people.

Proposition 36

The Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act, also known as Proposition 36, was passed by 61% of California voters on November 7, 2000. This initiative allows first and second time non-violent, simple drug possession offenders the opportunity to receive substance abuse treatment instead of incarceration.

Proposition 36 allocates \$120 million annually for five and one half years to pay for treatment services, beginning January 2001. However, due to the large disparity between incarceration and treatment costs, this initiative is estimated to save California taxpayers \$1.5 billion over the five-year period of time.

Quarterly Reports

Quarterly status reports will be submitted to the ACF Region IX Office within 30 days after the end of the first full quarter following the approval of the PIP. If, for example, the PIP is approved on June 23, 2003, the first reporting quarter will be comprised of July, August and September. A quarterly report will be submitted by October 30, 2003. Quarterly reports will contain a description of progress made during the previous quarter and any data about measurable factors.

Risk, Safety and Needs Assessments

Assessments are an important component of the Redesign. After the initial face to face assessment, there will be subsequent meetings with the family to do a comprehensive assessment of strengths and needs, parental protective capacity, ongoing risks, and continued review of safety plans. If safety is a continuing concern and the case is being handled by the community network, the agency will re-refer the case to CWS. The nature of the case plan that emerges from the comprehensive assessment will differ based on what has to be done to assure safety, what the goals are for the case, and who should be involved in promoting the necessary changes within the family. The tools for the comprehensive assessment will apply for both in-home and out-of-home cases.

Safety assessments will be done at multiple times during the life of a case. The first face to face assessment will be done when direct information is gathered as to the current safety and risk. Based on this initial assessment, safety plans will be put into place immediately, as needed. By gathering information as to the concerns about the protection of the child, by exploring the protective capacity of the parents, and by preliminarily identifying needs for services, the worker will address risk. As the case moves forward to comprehensive assessment and service planning, a more thorough understanding will be obtained of family strengths and needs, as well as changes that must be made to assure the ongoing safety and protection of the child. Services and resources will be evaluated as to their effectiveness in reducing risk and in making an impact towards the needed changes. Decisions on case closure will also address safety, risk, and whether necessary changes to assure child safety have been made.

Technical Assistance (TA)

Technical assistance to an individual county, as applicable to an action step, can include, but is not limited to: CDSS providing training, resources, problem

analysis, identification of systems improvements, policy development and interpretation, developing procedures, and the identification of and recommendation of practice changes that have demonstrated improved outcomes.